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THE BREEDING IN CANADA

OF



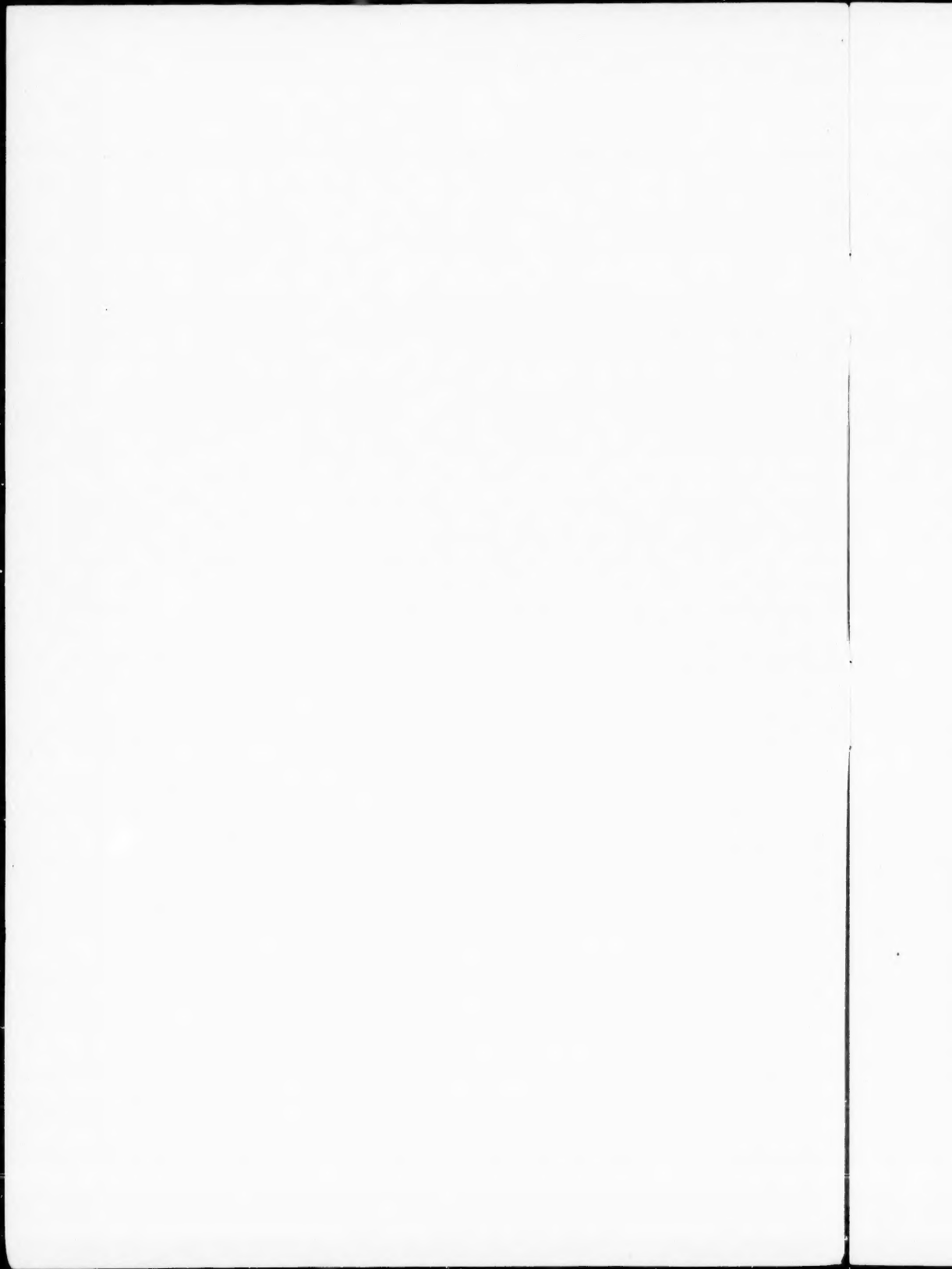
HORSES FOR ARMY USE

BY



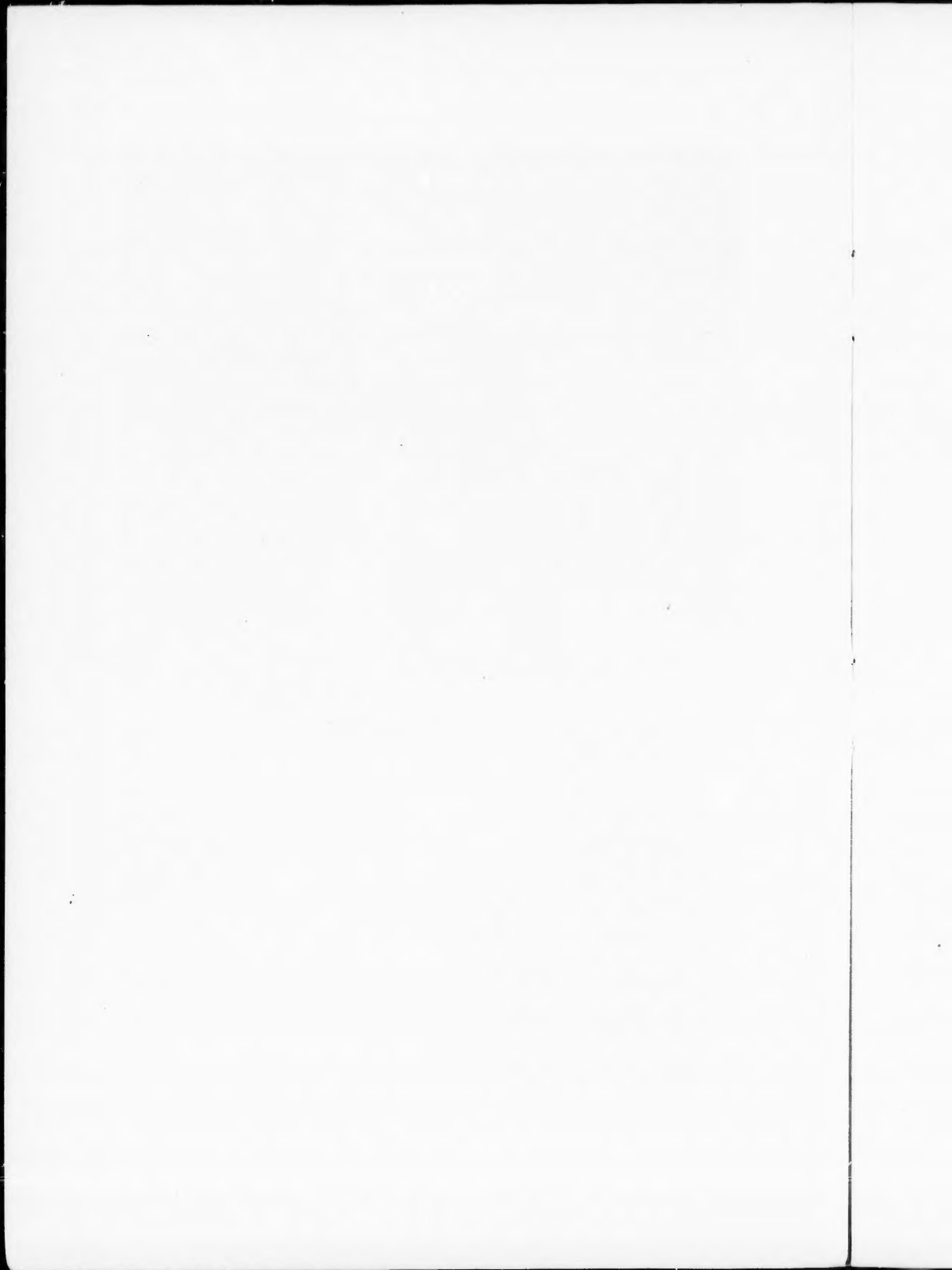
J. G. RUTHERFORD

Chief Veterinary Inspector





GENERAL



THE BREEDING IN CANADA

OF

HORSES FOR ARMY USE.

While the supply of horses suitable for military use has always, even in times of peace, been a serious question, the experience of our South African troubles has given it an importance altogether new and somewhat startling. It has now been clearly shown that troops under modern conditions of warfare must be able to move rapidly from place to place, and that the mounted soldier has thus an immense advantage over the less mobile infantry man.

This development has led to the purchase by the British Government, during the present campaign, of a very much larger number of horses than would otherwise have been required. Nor has the lesson been learned by Britain alone; all military nations have been closely watching the operations in South Africa, and there is no room for doubt, that the general demand for horses suitable for army purposes will be much greater in the future than in the past. Of the horses purchased for use in Africa the Dominion has by no means furnished her fair share, although in addition to those taken by our own contingents, a considerable number have been picked up in Eastern Canada by Lt.-Col. Dent of the Remount Department of the British Army. It is not, however, an easy matter at present to obtain in this country any large number of horses altogether suitable for army use. No encouragement to produce them has, until very recently, been shown to breeders, and there being no very active home demand for any but the very best of the sorts now asked for, they have not been bred to anything like the extent of which the country is capable. After the visit of Colonel Ravenhill in 1887 the western ranchers, in expectation of a market, went to much trouble and expense in securing and importing suitable foundation stock, and as a result were successful in producing many first class cavalry horses. As however, beyond a limited number taken by the North-west Mounted Police and a few by foreign buyers, there was no sale for them as such, the breeders have largely turned their attention to other and, under the circumstances, more profitable lines of stock.

The natural conditions in Canada are, it need hardly be said, most favourable for the production of the animals wanted, while in the event of serious international disturbance Canadian horses would always be available for Imperial use while it might be impossible to procure them in foreign countries. Again, through the medium of our great trans-continental railway they could be shipped from either Atlantic or Pacific ports to any part of the world where they might be required.

In view of the strong probability that the demand hitherto lacking will in the future be such as to warrant the breeding in fair numbers of the horses needed for military use, a brief description of those now being sought for and purchased by the agents of the British war office, and a few hints as to how they may be produced, will not be out of place.

They are of three fairly distinct types as required for artillery, cavalry and mounted infantry.

At the Canadian horse show held in Toronto in April, 1900, the Dominion Government gave special prizes for each of these classes, and as Lt.-Col. Dent, the

Imperial remount officer detailed to purchase in Canada, was one of the judges, thus making the selections authoritative, a description of each first prize animal, together with its measurements, will be appended to the general list of requirements in all three divisions.

THE ARTILLERY HORSE.

The artillery horse asked for by the army buyer is really a smart, active van or express horse on short legs, with plenty of bone and substance and enough quality to ensure staying power in fairly fast work. He should stand from 15.2 to 16 hands, weigh not less than 1,300 lbs., and measure at least 8 inches below the knee and 7.2 inches in girth. Considerable variation in type is permissible, the work of the horse artillery demanding greater speed and therefore more warm blood than are necessary for ordinary field artillery, while in all batteries properly horsed, the lead and centre pairs are slightly taller and more rangy than the wheelers, the latter requiring greater strength and substance. The first prize entry at Toronto last spring was of the lighter sort, being in fact the pure-bred Hackney mare 'Cassandra.' She stood 16 hands, weighed 1,325 lbs. and girthed 76 inches. She measured 8.4 inches below the knee and 20.4 inches round the arm; from crest to withers 36 inches, withers to croup 29 inches, croup to tail, an important point in all military horses, 19 inches. Although in this particular instance the prize went to a Hackney, it does not, by any means, follow that gun horses should be either wholly or partly of that breed. They may be obtained by the judicious use of the Thoroughbred horse on mares of size, substance and action, or by stinting good half-bred or strong roadster mares to a biggish Hackney or breedy coach sire. So long as they show sufficient quality to ensure activity and endurance and at the same time meet the requirements as to size and substance, the question of pedigree is of secondary importance.

THE CAVALRY HORSE.

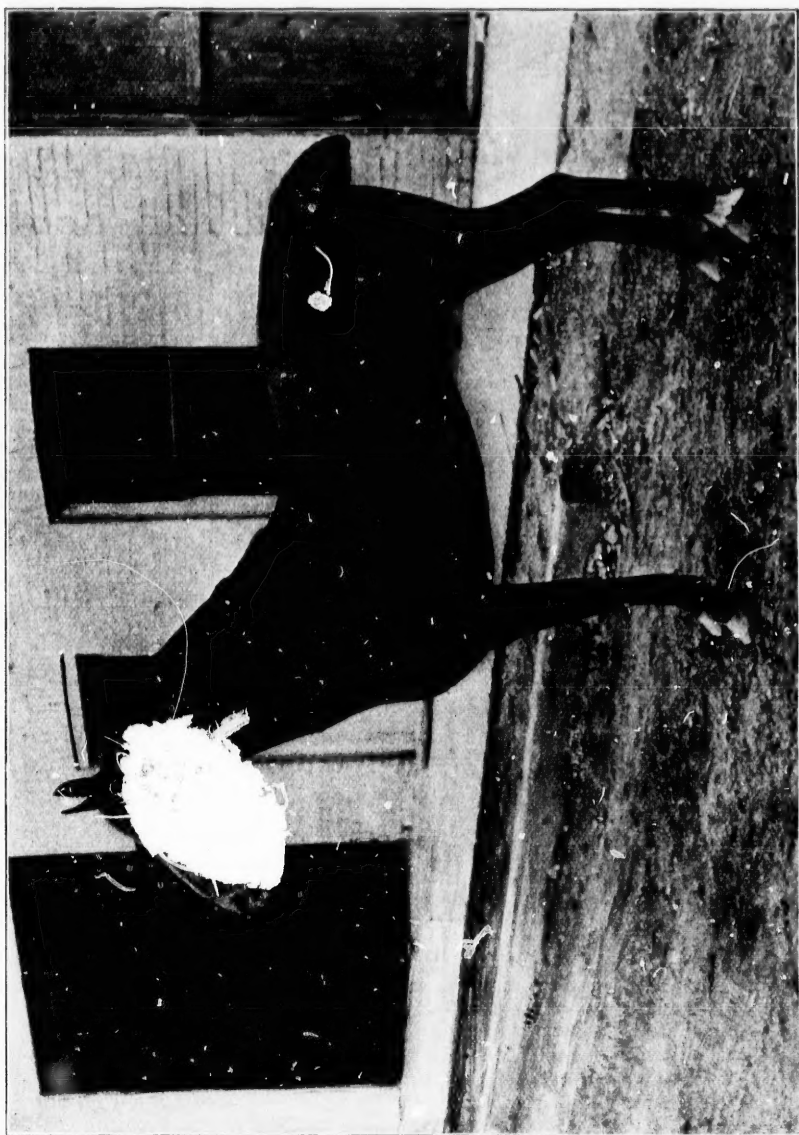
The cavalry horse is of a somewhat different type, and one at present too rare in Canada, owing to the preference shown by many light horse breeders for the American trotting sire, an animal possessing but few of the qualities and characteristics of the riding horse.

Colonel Ravenhill in his report says:—'A malformation in the Canadian horses which might advantageously be brought to the notice of breeders is that their quarters are short and very drooping, a serious defect in a military horse. Indeed we had to reject as unsuitable a considerable proportion on this account; this is not only a great dissight, but where a mounted soldier has to carry a kit on his horse's back it amounts to an insuperable objection; it has arisen from the too extensive use of the American trotter for stud purposes, this defect being very apparent in that horse. This is an additional reason for the more continuous introduction of the English Thoroughbred, or such horses which are very straight in their backs and quarters, with tail set on high.'

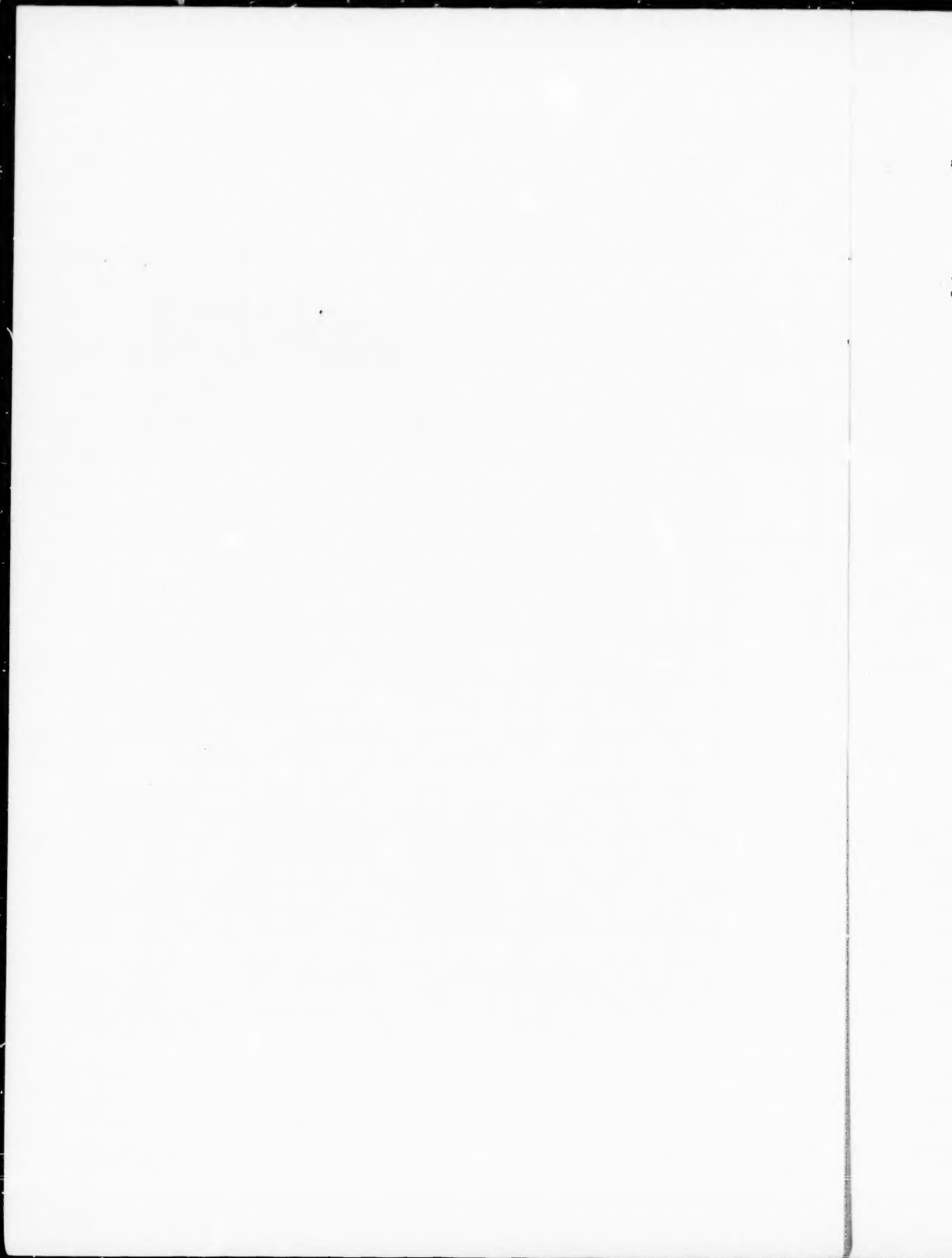
To get good cavalry horses the Thoroughbred sire is almost indispensable, as in no other way can the lengthy rein, sloping shoulder, deep chest, strong loin and long quarter so necessary in this class, be obtained with any certainty or regularity. Freedom of movement is essential, but high action and great trotting speed are neither required nor wanted. Horses of this class should stand not less than 15.1 nor more than 15.3, and should measure at least 8 inches below the knee and 70 inches in girth.

The first prize at Toronto was taken by a brown gelding named 'General' said to be by a Thoroughbred horse. He was a remarkable well proportioned weight carrier of considerable length and great substance. His measurements were as follows:—height 15.3, cannon bone 8 inches, arm 21 inches, crest to withers 37 inches, withers to croup 33 inches, croup to tail 15 inches, girth 74 inches.

Horses of this stamp can best be procured by the use of selected Thoroughbred sires on strong half bred mares, on the better class of roadster mares, or on mares from Hackney or Coach sires, provided they show some blood and quality. On mares having



SQUIRE RICKELL.



a preponderance of warm blood or those showing any inclination to weediness, a good Hackney horse might be advantageously used

THE MOUNTED INFANTRY HORSE.

The mounted infantry horse for which such an unprecedented demand has recently arisen and which is likely to be even more sought after if present war conditions continue to prevail, is a smaller and cheaper animal than either of those already described. He is in fact a cob, a strong pony on short legs, with as much quality as can consistently be looked for in conjunction with the substance required to carry an armed man. He must have a fair shoulder and a good back, be deep through the heart and stand squarely on good legs well furnished with bone. In height he may be from 14.1 to 15.1, but 14.3 is the favourite standard with Lt. Col. Dent. Strength is the great desideratum but a reasonable amount of activity is indispensable.

The little horse 'Hero' which took first prize in Toronto, stood 15.1, measured 73 inches below the knee and 19½ round the arm; from crest to withers he was 34 inches, withers to croup 27 inches, croup to tail 15 inches. He girthed 73 inches and as the measurements show, was an excellent type of the weight-carrying cob. Such horses can be obtained by a stout Thoroughbred sire from French Canadian or other strong pony mares, or by the judicious use of the Hackney horse on the smaller roadsters and on those little mares too common in Canada, resulting from the ill-advised use of the racing or rather sprinting type of Thoroughbred on light mares of trotting blood or other mixed breeding.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS.

In times of peace no horses are bought at less than four nor more than seven years old.

As regards colour, bays, browns, chestnuts and blacks are preferred; a few grays are required for special corps, but odd coloured horses are not wanted.

No unsound or seriously blemished horse will be taken; the veterinary examination is fairly strict but is also strictly fair. Un-docked horses are preferred and no horse with a very short docked tail will be taken.

In time of war, however, when the demand, as a rule, exceeds the available supply, purchasing officers overlook many minor defects, provided the animals offered are sound and serviceable, while conforming generally to the requirements of the service.

ADVICE TO BREEDERS.

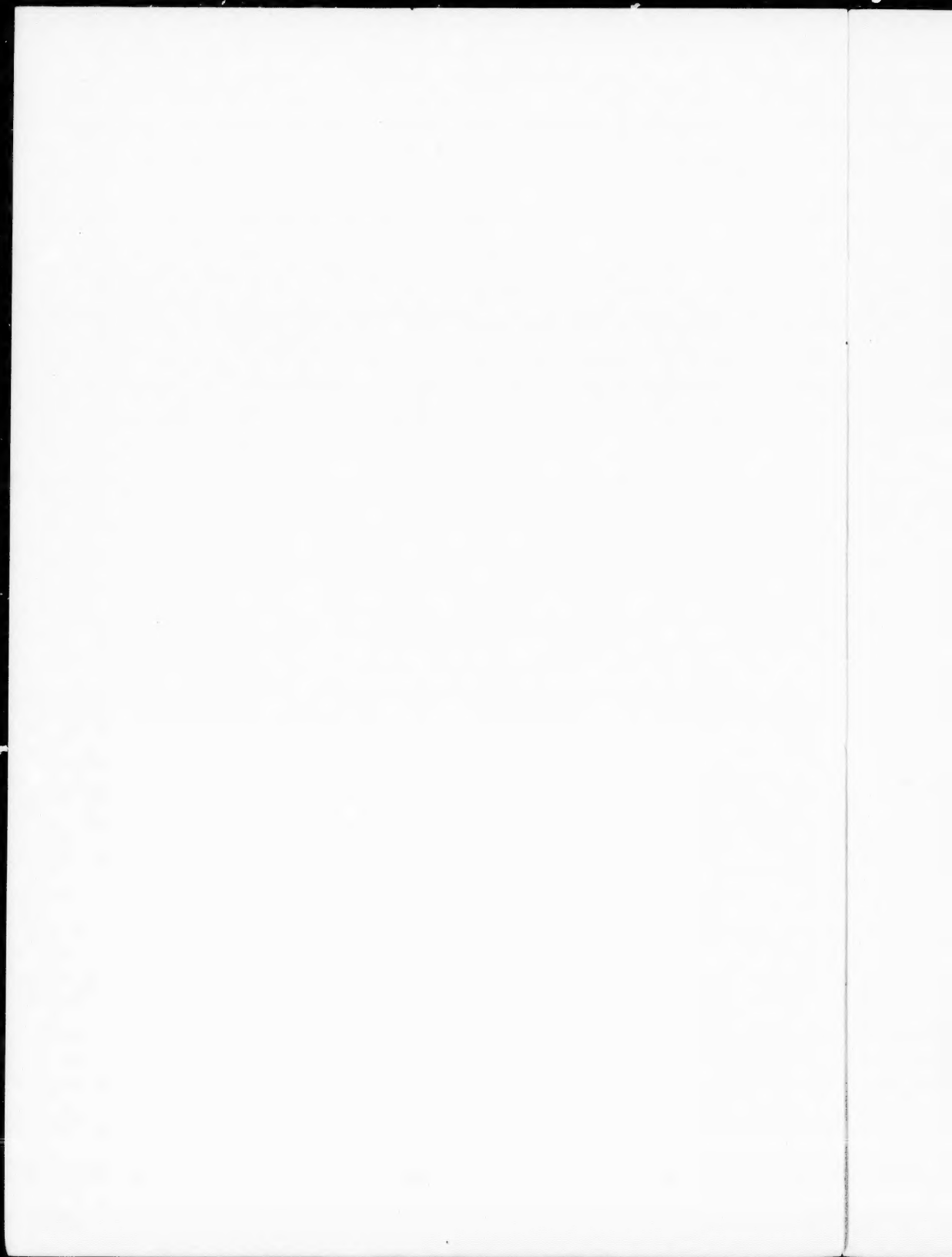
Breeders on the Western ranges will, no doubt, find it profitable from this time forward, to devote considerable attention to the production of horses especially adapted for military use.

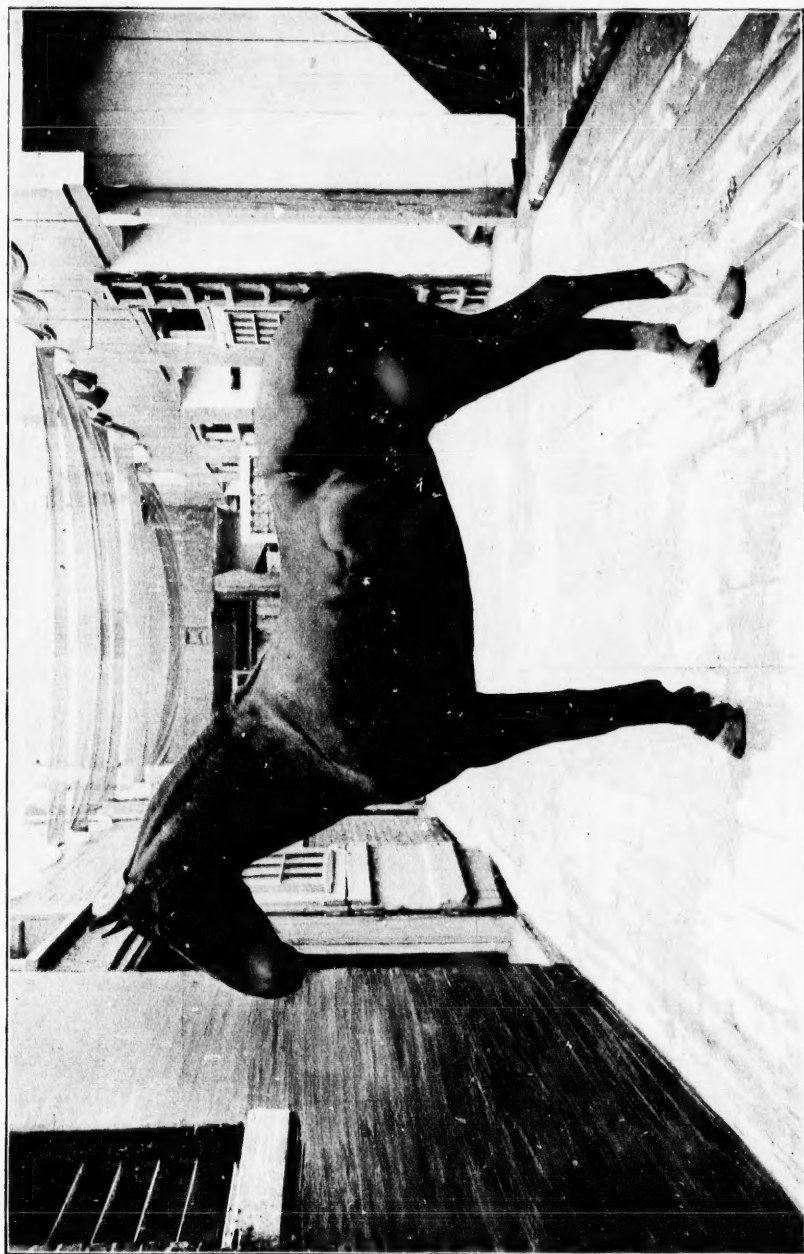
In the other portions of the Dominion the supply of such horses can be enormously increased with but little extra effort or expense on the part of the breeder.

Immense numbers of light horses and ponies are annually bred in Canada of which, many when grown are, owing to their non-descript character, of but little value. If the breeders of these animals would send their lighter mares to pure bred stallions, of the British breeds, intelligently selected with a view to the production of a definite type of military horse, a vast improvement in our clean-legged stock would speedily manifest itself.

High prices would then as now be easily obtainable for really superior animals; most of the others would find ready sale for army use as well as for other purposes, while the misfits and object lessons would be less numerous and, except by comparison, not less valuable, than they are at present.

J. G. RUTHERFORD.





CASSANDRA.